



DHS Matters!

Michigan Department of Human Services • Lansing, Michigan • October 13, 2005
Produced by DHS Office of Communications, Suite 1510, Grand Tower, Lansing
Submit stories by e-mail to DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov



"Halloween Korinna" fundraisers (l-r) Olivia Guerra age 4; Chloe Smith, 6; Paula Guerra, 5; Vanessa, 6, and Kaitlyn Odlum, 3. The Odlums are daughters of Ingham County DHS children's services specialist [Wendy Odlum](#).

Amazing kids answer call to victims of Hurricane Katrina, one cup at a time

From Tanya Turner
Ingham County DHS, Lansing
TurnerT4@michigan.gov

After seeing and hearing of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina, the employees of Ingham County DHS responded to the call to help. Ingham County DHS director [Susan Hull](#) designated every Monday in September as casual day for a cause where staff could dress casually for a \$3 donation with proceeds going to the American Red Cross to aid Hurricane Katrina relief efforts.

After hearing the plan to raise money for the victims of hurricane Katrina, [Wendy Odlum](#), foster care specialist in Ingham County DHS, went home and shared the news with her family. To Wendy's amazement her daughters – Vanessa and Kaitlyn Odlum – wanted to help. Vanessa and Kaitlyn along with three of their friends Chloe Smith, Olivia & Paula Guerra, planned and organized a lemonade stand to raise money for the victims of Katrina.

The girls did everything from making the lemonade (with a little help from mom) to setting up tables & chairs and making a lemonade sign. The girls explained to each of their customers their mission to help others, "You can give .25 cents or anything you want" said one of the girls.

continues on page 2, see "Amazing kids"

Click to read...

Back to school with DHS.....2

Local office stories.....3

Your letters.....4



During the last week of July, Cass County migrant specialists **Jessica Lopez** and **Susie Perez** completed outreach with all Cass County migrant camps to prepare children for the delivery of back to school backpacks. On Aug. 1 the migrant children were prepared and waiting for Susie and Jessica to arrive to help members of The Granger Missionary Church distribute 100 backpacks. A special thank you goes to the Cass County Migrant Program Workers and The Granger Missionary Church. — from **Shelia Beaty**

Amazing kids answer call

from page 1

"We're raising money for 'Halloween Korrina'," said three year old Kaitlyn with a big smile on her face.

Through their lemonade sales these young ladies raised and proudly donated \$25 to the Ingham County DHS casual day for a cause.

In addition to the lemonade sale the girls continue their efforts by raising additional monies and collecting canned goods to send to the people of the Gulf Coast.

Hats off to these amazing young ladies for their hard work and giving spirits. In response to the ladies' hard work each received a letter and certificate of appreciation from Hull.

Ingham County DHS employees -- along with the proceeds from the amazing little ladies' lemonade sale and other monetary donations from Ingham County -- have raised and donated more than \$1,861 to the American Red Cross to aid in the Hurricane Katrina Relief efforts.

Kudos to Ingham County DHS for a job well done to aid those in need.

Back to school because it's cool

From Marty Lawrence and Sue Tallman
Wayne County DHS Taylor District, Taylor
LawrenceM3@michigan.gov and TallmanS@michigan.gov

On Aug. 24 the Wayne County Taylor District sponsored the "Back to School Because It's Cool" kickoff rally for parents and students from their Family Resource Center school, Myers Elementary. **Connie Bennett**, family resource coordinator, and **Sue Tallman**, community resource coordinator, orchestrated the event with assistance from Suzanne Downing, Myers Elementary School principal and Marilyn Vargo, the school social worker.

Because of in-progress building repairs, Myers Elementary could not be used for the rally as planned. With cooperation from the Taylor School District staff, Sue and Connie moved the event to Fischer Elementary School in Taylor. They notified presenters, facilitators and parents of the change in location and arranged a shuttle for those that needed transportation.

The rally started right on time with greetings from **John Tarkowski**, Taylor District manager.

"The 'music lady' treated the children to a fun and interactive musical interlude," Tarkowski said. "An inspector from the Taylor Fire Department taught the children about fire safety and a local Hapkido martial arts expert explained 'stranger danger.' At the same time, representatives from Children's Hospital and the Wayne County Sheriff's Department shared information about home and child safety, Internet danger and identity theft with parents."

After lunch parents and children proceeded to the raffle area to see if they had won a prize. Of course, everyone was a winner! Each child also received a book bag filled with school supplies. Parents were given bags filled with informative pamphlets and assorted household items. Eight lucky families received family passes to The Henry Ford Museum.

The event generated excitement and enthusiasm for the new school year. As families were leaving the event, there were many hugs and thanks from both parents and students. The smiles on the faces of the children were priceless.



An official of the Taylor Fire Department entertains kids during the "Back to school because it's cool" rally sponsored by the Wayne County Taylor District.



Grand Traverse-Leelanau staff with Denny (back l-r) Dawn McLaughlin, Adam Bragg and Laurie Kupferer. Front: Sheryl Oppen, Cindy Nelson, "Denny" and Deb Prohaska.

Denny brought light into our office

From Dawn McLaughlin

Grand Traverse & Leelanau DHS, Traverse City

McGlaughlinD@michigan.gov

"Denny" was an Experience Works person in the Grand Traverse-Leelanau DHS office. Because of his own experiences Denny greeted each customer with a smile and words of encouragement. His compassion strengthened our staff and customers alike. He left us this note on his departure:

"I have accepted a new position as an associate with a business consultant and business brokerage firm. This is similar to what I used to do and will be able to use all of my skills and knowledge from my past business experiences.

"I am quite excited about this new opportunity. It will require a lot of new training as well as upgrading of my older skills and I look forward to that.

"However it is a bittersweet feeling that I leave. This has been a wonderful experience for me and I have received more than I have given. I have come to understand the 'culture of poverty' and how it affects low-income and disenfranchised (people).

"Some of you know that when I came here I had gone through over three years of severe clinical depression. I did not leave my home, answer the phone or the door during that period. Coming here was my first exposure with fellow workers and the public.

"I have marveled at your commitment to the needy and how hard you work. Just remember – you may be the only positive thing that your client experiences today! Thank you all for your friendship and support. It has been a wonderful ride!"

Experience Works is the federal job training program that used to be called Green Thumb. It is for age 55 and older to ready folks for private sector employment.

Helping prepare the work force of the future

From Yvonne Brock, Program Section Manager

Macomb County DHS

Mt. Clemens District, Clinton Township

BrockY@michigan.gov

The Mt. Clemens office recently had the pleasure of working with Baker College student Heather Spodeck, who was assigned to the staff of [Kay Ferguson](#) and her FIS/ES unit. As a result, Ferguson was recently awarded a certificate of appreciation from Baker College thanking her for assisting their student with real world work experience. However staff from many units were instrumental in providing her with work experiences.



During her time with our office, Spodeck learned about a number of programs that the Department of Human Services provides. She accompanied staff on field visits to our local drug and rehabilitation center and a Michigan Works! site where we outreach to assist families as they work toward self-sufficiency.

This was a very successful collaboration with Baker College. Our office was happy to provide support for future members of the work force. We are thankful for their willingness to work with what we consider one of the premier employers in the state of Michigan.

DHS employee releases music CD

From Shelly J Marner, CPS Supervisor

Midland County DHS, Midland

MarnerS@michigan.gov

[Gezelle Myers](#), a Children's Foster Care licensing worker at Midland County DHS, released her first musical CD titled "Personal Praise" (CD cover pictured). The music is inspirational praise and was written by Gezelle herself.

Her family played a large part in the development and release, singing backup and playing some of the music heard on the CD.



Gezelle attributes her musical talents to her mother who also played piano and violin as Gezelle and her siblings grew up. Gezelle has been performing in her church choir and in concerts for over 30 years.

This CD was a dream of Gezelle's for many years. If you are interested in purchasing a copy of this wonderful CD please contact Gezelle Myers at (989) 496-2165 or send your check/money order for \$13 to Gezelle Myers, P O Box 1268, Midland, MI 48641.

Date: Sept. 27
To: DHS Matters
Subj: A job well done

On Sept. 21 I received a call from our local county health project requesting that DHS help expedite a Medicaid opening for a self-employed man with whom they had been working. He had just been diagnosed with multiple types of cancer and was given three months to live and had no ongoing medical insurance with which to cover his medical costs. Because there were no minor children in the home we were going to have to pursue Medicaid based on disability. At a minimum this process takes 30 days.

Your letters,
intercepted
and otherwise

The wife came into the office the next morning and the application was assigned to eligibility specialist **Greg Johnston**. As Greg was not expecting this application I filled him in on the specifics and he agreed to see the wife right away. Prior to the interview, Greg contacted **Kae Cassidy** (of) Disability Determination Service out of Kalamazoo and is part of the Medical Review Team that serves Muskegon County. Kae told Greg if he could obtain a physician statement confirming the diagnoses and terminal nature of the illnesses, as well as a pathology report, she would approve the disability the same day. For any staff who process these types of Medicaid applications, a same day approval is unheard of.

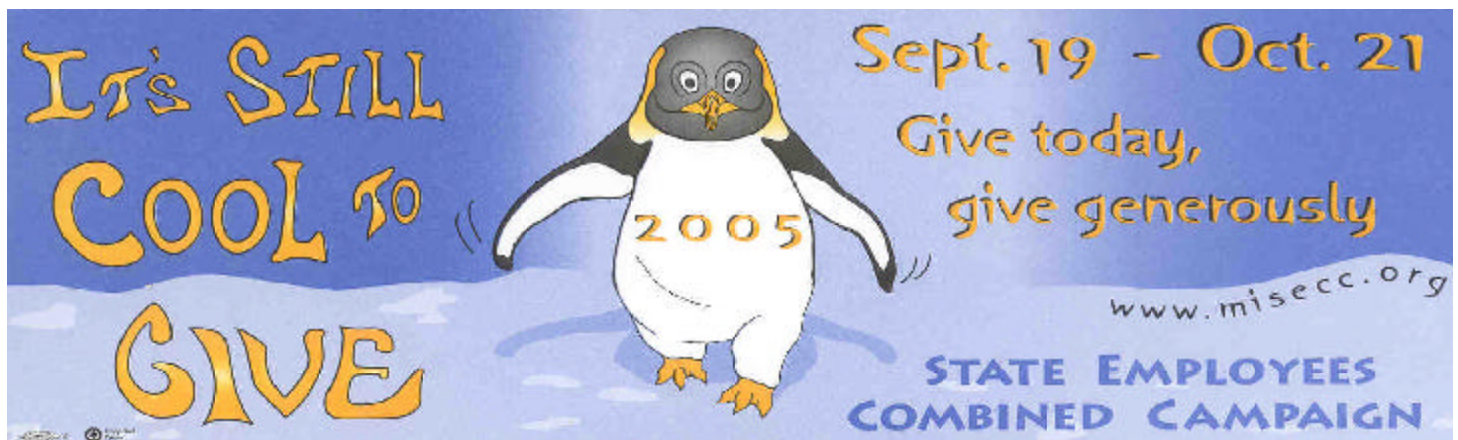
Greg gave this information to the wife and also contacted the member of the Health Project who agreed to advocate on the wife's behalf to get the documents quickly. The husband had an appointment at Ann Arbor's University of Michigan Hospital the next day and the wife told Greg that they would not see her husband unless he had Medicaid coverage. Desperate to begin treatment immediately the couple left for their appointment in Ann Arbor not knowing if they would be turned away or not. Before that day was over the documents were received and faxed to Kae who gave the worker a verbal approval. The worker immediately opened the client's Medicaid which enabled the client to receive treatment.

While I'm sure this type of partnering happens across the state the experience is rarely shared. Greg wanted to acknowledge Kae for her helpfulness and the speed with which she made her decision. Greg's other comments were: "Kae always answers her phone. If we aren't sure how to proceed in processing a case with complicated medical issues, Kae advises us on what steps to take and how to take them."

I have had an opportunity to partner with Kae. As a worker, I found Kae to be very accessible and supportive. When there was no Medicaid training of which to send new staff a few years ago, I contacted Kae, who gladly came to our county and provided training and materials. Kae has always provided DHS with the highest quality of service.

I also want to commend Greg Johnston for his immediate action and advocacy for his client. Workload demands sometimes supercede the provision of quality customer service. In this case, Greg dropped everything to work on this process and get the Medicaid opened so his client could get immediate medical treatment. Greg always strives to give his best and without question; he did so in this situation. We are fortunate to have such quality partnerships and staff.

Robin Brand, Family Independence Manager
Muskegon County DHS, Muskegon



DHS Matters! is a product of Michigan's Department of Human Services
Marianne Udow, Director • Karen Stock, Director, Office of Communications
Larry VanDeSande, editor • Submit stories by e-mail to: DHS-Newsletter@michigan.gov